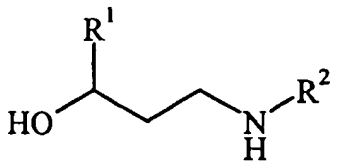
AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This Listing Of Claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the application.

Listing of the Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for the preparation of a compound of formula

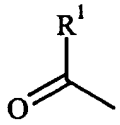


I

and/or an addition salt of a proton acid, wherein R^1 and R^2 independently represent alkyl, cycloalkyl, aryl or aralkyl, each aryl or aralkyl being optionally further substituted with alkyl, alkoxy and/or halogen, which process comprises the following steps:

a) reacting a mixture comprising:

(i) a methyl ketone of formula:



IV

wherein R^1 is as defined above, and

(ii) a compound of formula:

$H_2N–R^2$ (V)

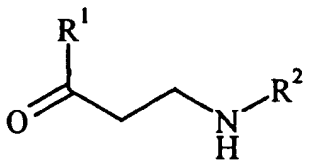
and/or an addition salt of proton acid, wherein R^2 is as defined above, and

(iii) formaldehyde or a source of formaldehyde selected from the group consisting of formaldehyde in aqueous solution, 1,3, 5-trioxane, paraformaldehyde and mixtures thereof, in the presence of

a solvent selected from the group consisting of water, aliphatic alcohols, cycloaliphatic alcohols and mixtures thereof, and

optionally a proton acid

to afford a ~~β-amino ketone~~ β-keto amine of formula:



II

and/or an addition salt of a proton acid, and

b) reducing the carbonyl group of said ~~β-amino ketone~~ β-keto amine to afford a compound of formula I, and/or an addition salt of a proton acid

wherein the ~~first~~ step a) is carried out at a pressure above 1.5 bar.

Claim 2 (Original): The process of claim 1 wherein R^1 is selected from the group consisting of linear or branched C_{1-8} alkyl, C_{3-8} cycloalkyl, phenyl, naphthyl, furanyl, benzofuranyl, thienyl, benzo[b]thienyl and aralkyl, wherein the alkyl moiety of the aralkyl residue is linear C_{1-4} alkyl, and the aryl moiety is selected from the group consisting of phenyl, naphthyl, furanyl, benzofuranyl, thienyl and benzo[b]thienyl, each aryl or aralkyl being optionally substituted with halogen, linear or branched C_{1-4} alkyl, linear or branched C_{1-4} alkoxy, C_{3-6} cycloalkyl, CF_3, C_2F_5, OCF_3 or OC_2F_5.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 1 wherein R^2 is selected from the group consisting of linear or branched C_{1-8} alkyl, C_{3-8} cycloalkyl, phenyl,

naphthyl, furanyl, benzofuranyl, thienyl, benzo[b]thienyl and aralkyl, wherein the alkyl moiety of the aralkyl residue is linear C_{1-4} alkyl, and the aryl moiety is selected from the group consisting of phenyl, naphthyl, furanyl, benzofuranyl, thienyl and benzo[b]thienyl, each aryl or aralkyl being optionally substituted with halogen, linear or branched C_{1-4} alkyl, linear or branched C_{1-4} alkoxy, C_{3-6} cycloalkyl, CF_3, C_2F_5, OCF_3 or OC_2F_5.

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the compound of formula V is present in an amount at least equimolar to that of the compound of formula IV.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the proton acid is a carboxylic or an inorganic acid, the acid being preferably selected from the group consisting of formic acid, acetic acid, propionic acid, oxalic acid, malonic acid, benzoic acid, HF, HCl, HBr, HI, H_2SO_4, H_3PO_4, mono alkali malonate, alkali hydrogensulfates, alkali hydrogenphosphates and alkali hydrogencarbonates.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 1, wherein aliphatic and cycloaliphatic alcohols are selected from the group selected of linear or branched aliphatic C_{1-12} alcohols, cycloaliphatic C_{5-8} alcohols, di- and/or triethylene glycols and mono C_{1-4} alkyl or acetyl derivatives thereof, each of said alcohols containing 1 to 3 hydroxy groups.

Claim 7 (Original): The process of claim 6, wherein the alcohol is selected from the group consisting of methanol, ethanol, propanol, isopropyl alcohol, butanol, isobutanol, *tert*-butanol, 1-pentanol, 2-pentanol, 3-pentanol, 1-hexanol, 2-hexanol, cyclopentanol, cyclohexanol, 1,2-ethanediol, 1, 2-propanediol, 1, 2-butanediol, 2,3-butanediol, 1,4-butanediol, 1,2,3-pro-panetriol,

1,2, 6-hexanetriol, diethylene glycol, diethylene glycol monomethyl ether, diethylene glycol monoethyl ether, diethylene glycol monobutyl ether, diethylene glycol monoacetate, triethylene glycol, triethylene glycol monomethyl ether, triethylene glycol monoethyl ether, triethylene glycol monobutyl ether and triethylene glycol monoacetate.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): The process of claim 1, wherein the pressure during reaction step a) is ~~above 1.5 bar, more preferably~~ in the range of 1.5 to 10 bar ~~and more particularly preferred in the range of 1.5 to 5 bar~~.

Claims 9 to 20 (Cancelled)

Claim 21 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 2 wherein R^2 is selected from the group consisting of linear or branched C_{1-8} alkyl, C_{3-8} cycloalkyl, phenyl, naphthyl, furanyl, benzofuranyl, thienyl, benzo[b]thienyl and aralkyl, wherein the alkyl moiety of the aralkyl residue is linear C_{1-4} alkyl, and the aryl moiety is selected from the group consisting of phenyl, naphthyl, furanyl, benzofuranyl, thienyl and benzo[b]thienyl, each aryl or aralkyl being optionally substituted with halogen, linear or branched C_{1-4} alkyl, linear or branched C_{1-4} alkoxy, C_{3-6} cycloalkyl, CF_3, C_2F_5, OCF_3 or OC_2F_5.

Claim 22 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 3, wherein the compound of formula V is present in an amount at least equimolar to that of the compound of formula IV.

Claim 23 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 4, wherein the proton acid is a carboxylic or an inorganic acid, the acid being preferably selected from the group consisting of formic acid, acetic acid, propionic acid, oxalic acid, malonic acid, benzoic acid, HF, HCl, HBr, HI, H_2SO_4, H_3PO_4, mono alkali malonate, alkali hydrogensulfates, alkali hydrogenphosphates and alkali hydrogencarbonates.

Claim 24 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 5, wherein aliphatic and cycloaliphatic alcohols are selected from the group selected of linear or branched aliphatic C_{1-12} alcohols, cycloaliphatic C_{5-8} alcohols, di- and/or triethylene glycols and mono C_{1-4} alkyl or acetyl derivatives thereof, each of said alcohols containing 1 to 3 hydroxy groups.

Claim 25 (Currently Amended): The process of claim 7, wherein the pressure during reaction step a) is ~~above 1.5 bar, more preferably~~ in the range of 1.5 to 10 bar ~~and more particularly preferred in the range of 1.5 to 5 bar~~.

Claims 26 to 30 (Cancelled)

Claim 31 (New): The process of claim 8, wherein the pressure during reaction step a) is in the range of 1.5 to 5 bar.

Claim 32 (New): The process of claim 25, wherein the pressure during reaction step a) is in the range of 1.5. to 5 bar.